# THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. June 23, 1944 Tammuz 2, 5704 No. 10

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*REALITIES AND VALUES* *CORRESPONDENCE*

Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of universal freedom, justice and peace.

# the Reconstructionist

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We have received much favorable comment on the Literary Issue of June 9th. It may interest our readers to know that the issue was planned and largely executed by our Book Editor, Dr. Samuel Dinin.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE JEWISH RECONSTRUCTIONIST FOUNDATION, Inc.

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# Reconstructionist

Vol. X. June 23, 1944 Tammuz 2, 5704 No. 10

## EDITORIALS

### FREE PORTS FOR HOSPITALITY NOT SEGREGATION

THE hope that refugees will be admitted to this country for temporary sojourn in "free ports" or special havens until after the conclusion of the war seems likely to be realized. Proposals to this effect will be given a public hearing by a Senate Committee and the President has given his approval to the general idea, making the further concrete suggestion that abandoned army camps be utilized for this purpose. In fact, an army training camp is even now being prepared for the reception of refugees at Fort Ontario near Oswego, N. Y. This is particularly significant when we consider that the President has called attention to the obvious advantage of locating such camps in countries near the place of origin of the refugees to facilitate their repatriation after the war. That he is nevertheless planning one or more such havens in the United States is evidence that he appreciates the value of this action as a token of America's interest in the problem. It was the want of similar evidence of what our country was itself prepared to do for refugees from Nazi persecution that was largely responsible for the fiasco of the Evian and the Bermuda conferences.

The President has called attention to the advantage of having some of these refugee havens located in Mediterranean countries. He mentioned specifically army camps no longer needed for their original purpose in North Africa. It would not be amiss to point out that Palestine is also on the Mediterranean coast and that, since most Jews will not feel secure in returning to the hate-poisoned atmosphere of countries long dominated by the Nazis or other anti-Semitic regimes, it would be advantageous to place Jewish refugees in or near their national home until the war is over. For we cannot imagine that the iniquitous White Paper policy will long survive a United Nations victory.

But whatever places may be chosen as temporary domiciles for the refugees, the fact that their lives are being preserved is what counts most. We appreciate the fact that our Government has provided the means for the immediate physical rescue of at least 1,000 of these refugees and provided them with temporary shelter and security in this country. We trust that this is only a beginning. At present there is little more that our Government can be reasonably expected to do for the refugees than to keep them alive. But, as

human beings, they will have needs far beyond the requirements of mere subsistence and safety. They will be confronted with a difficult spiritual situation. Denied the opportunity of competing economically with the native American population, and limited in their movements, they will feel themselves far from free in these "free ports." With what will they occupy their time? With brooding over their wrongs? Here is where voluntary community effort must supplement the activities of the Government. The community must provide for them such facilities for religious and cultural activities as will make them feel that they are not pariahs or prisoners of war but welcome guests enjoying the nation's hospitality. Since they are victims of the same sinister forces that threaten the life of our nation, they are entitled to such treatment at the hands of Americans, and certainly at the hands of Americans who are also Jews.

The Jewish community will have to provide specifically for the Jewish refugees opportunities for religious worship, Jewish education on child, adolescent and adult levels, Jewish and general cultural recreation. It should encourage creative thinking on their part, particularly along lines of reconstruction of the post-war community life wherever they expect to live it. Vocational re-education may be needed for adjustment to post-war economic conditions and opportunities for such education should be provided.

Above all, the refugees who come to this shore, Jewish or Gentile, must be made to feel that they are only physically segregated from the rest of the population because of the abnormal conditions created by the war, but that they are our brothers, and that, when peace comes, they will have a share in the creation of that better world we hope and pray will emerge from the victory of the United Nations.

## COMMUNITY APPROACH TO JEWISH SOCIAL SERVICE

DURING the week of May 17th the National Conference of Jewish Social Welfare, the National Association of Jewish Center Workers, and the National Council for Jewish Education met in annual conference in the same place and at the same time. This is not the first time that these bodies have held joint sessions. It is, however, the first time that they have met in joint conference where most sessions were held in common, and only a few sessions were held separately for discussion of specialized problems or procedures. In this conference, social workers, center workers, school workers (educators) met *as Jewish community workers.* They met to review together the results of the impact of two years of war events upon the structure of the total Jewish community, and upon the functions of its several constituent agencies in their relationship to each other and to the current or emerging post-war needs of the total Jewish community. Without forgetting their specialization, these specialists, nevertheless, sat together for three days to discuss changing needs of the community and to plan for change of agency functions to meet these needs. The by-products of these discussions were better mutual understanding and appreciation of each others' services, and a greater awareness of common purpose and community responsibility, a common desire for higher standards and even greater professional specialization in all fields of Jewish communal endeavor.

Another unique fact about this conference is the community approach to the planning of its program. Each of the professional bodies was equally represented in the program committee. This committee set up research groups in twenty-five cities, which studied de-

velopments in their respective communities during the past two years. Each of these research groups included the professional workers in social service, center, school, and synagogue agencies. The subjects studied by each of these groups included, 1) changes in the population and in the individual character of the community, 2) health and welfare programs, 3) group work and recreation, 4) Jewish education, cultural and religious life, 5) Jewish community relations, internal and external. The conference became in effect an institute in Jewish community planning in which all workers who attended shared.

While space will not permit even a brief report of the findings of the community studies and the conference discussions, it is possible to note a few outstanding facts. Financially, Jewish communities have been most successful in meeting their expanding needs, despite the extra burdens imposed on them by the war. All functional agencies are adjusting their services to meet changing requirements. Services to paying clients are being added to services to the poor or are replacing such services. The normal needs of Jewish community life are beginning to receive more attention, especially Jewish education. Democratic community processes are becoming more pronounced through the organization of Jewish community councils. Overlapping of agency functions is being studied with a view to greater coordination. Civic-protective agencies in particular are beginning to work together. The problem of securing skilled personnel has of course become acute for all agencies. Here too, coordination and cooperation among agencies are noticeable. Training for new functions is contemplated by all agencies. A rather disturbing fact recorded was the change in the size of Jewish families. These were reported to be smaller than the non-Jewish families. The implications of this fact are far reaching.

In all, this was an intelligently planned and fruitful conference. Not only did the participants profit individually, but they made a most valuable contribution to Jewish community knowledge, experience, and planning. The participating professional bodies have set a high standard for conference programs and have set an example of community approach to Jewish service. We congratulate them heartily. If rabbinical bodies too could unite among themselves and with professional bodies in a common community approach to Jewish service, the spiritual as well as the social and cultural aspects of Jewish community life would be enhanced.

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## THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST CONFERENCE

ON Friday, June 30, and Saturday, July 1, the annual Reconstructionist Conference will be held at the Building of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, in New York. Four sessions have been planned. The first will be a business meeting of the Foundation, the fiscal organ of the movement; and reports will be rendered of the progress made in rallying financial support for the many facets of activity undertaken under the auspices of the Foundation. Members of the Board of Directors will be elected by the members of the Foundation.

The next three sessions will be devoted to a consideration of three vital questions. First, the entire question of the direction which Reconstructionism should take in the years to come. For a number of years, the issue has been debated whether Reconstructionism should continue as a "school of thought" or as an organized movement. This issue has now been sharpened, so that the question now

reads: shall Reconstructionism attempt to function as a unifying force within Jewish life, or as a distinctive—and competitive—movement, or both? If both, which elements in the program and philosophy may be said to be "over-all," and which "sectional?" In this connection, the program of the Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship will be thoroughly canvassed, for the Fellowship will consist of those men and women who are completely committed to the Reconstructionist viewpoint, and the implementation of that viewpoint will rest largely upon the members of the various chapters.

Second, the problem of *mitzvot maasyiot,* or the positive obligations of the Jew from the point of view of Reconstructionism. What are the main motivations today for the observance of Jewish rites and duties? What should be the sanctions which may render most efficacious the promulgation of *mitzvot?* To what extent do Jews look for authoritative guidance, and where lies authority in our day? What should be the hierarchy of values to which Jews may refer when confronted with the necessity of choice between *mitzvot?* These are some of the questions to be discussed under this general heading.

Third, the heretofore unexplored problem of the internal life of the Jews in an autonomous Jewish Palestine. At this session, an attempt will be made to analyze the basic issues of Jewish self-government. Shall Jewish Palestine have a common law under which all Jewish and non-Jewish groups must live? How shall the problem of "church (synagogue) and state" be resolved? Will an interregnum period have to be planned during which the process of achieving homogeneity can be facilitated? It is quite clear that, if Zionists are to demand any form of Jewish autonomy whatever, and that autonomy is to be granted, the Jewish people will have to prepare itself for the responsibilities involved.

This closing session will, incidentally, be also a reception to the writers of the RECONSTRUCTIONIST who have contributed to its columns during the past three years. At no time have the writers had an opportunity to meet one another, or, in many instances, the editors themselves, and the readers have certainly not had the chance to meet face to face the men and women whose words they have been reading (we hope) during these years. Undoubtedly, a great deal of benefit will be derived from this encounter. Suggestions, criticisms and encomia will be equally welcomed.

The editors sincerely hope that there will be a large and interested attendance at these sessions. Judging from the past, conferences of this kind leave the leaders, the writers and the public better informed, more enthusiastic and more firmly resolved to carry on the tasks which they have jointly assumed in behalf of Israel and Israel's way of life.

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**With this issue, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST suspends publication until the fall. The editors wish to thank the readers for their continued interest and to express the hope that, during the coming years, the readers will help, as they have in the past, to make the American Jewish community aware of the philosophy and program of Reconstructionism. The editors and many of the other writers for THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST are eagerly anticipating meeting with many readers at the Annual Conference.**

## REALITIES AND VALUES

AIME PALLIERE HAS REEN REported dead in a concentration camp! What a sad and significant end for the author of "The Unknown Sanctuary." Readers will recall this fine and saintly non-Jew who discovered the wonders of Israel's religion and became a Jew and a rabbi. The thorough, and thoroughly despicable Nazis, undoubtedly feared this man as the symbol of the Jew's conquest of the non-Jewish mind. In reality he represented a high point in the ascent of man toward the heights of understanding and good will. Too bad that Palliere did not live to see the downfall of his oppressors. When Nazism lies in the dust, his spirit will continue to soar. He should be numbered among the martyrs *al Kiddush ha-shem.*

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A RECENT ISSUE OF HADOAR was devoted exclusively to honoring its editor, Menahem Ribalow. For thirty years this man has labored in the field of Hebrew letters. With dogged determination, he has carried on against odds to advance Hebrew journalism and literature in this country, and it is well that honor is done him. For it is only men of his calibre, his devotion and his energy, upon whom American Jews can depend to counteract the prevailing indifference to the Hebrew language. We have consistently maintained that a Hebrewless Judaism cannot long endure. Ribalow, through his insistence upon cultivating Hebrew in this land, has made a significant contribution, therefore, to the survival of Judaism.

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AMERICA IS A COUNTRY OF many faiths and creeds, but when President Roosevelt led the nation in prayer, he was indeed the *sheliah tzibbur* of all America, voicing the holiest thoughts and sentiments of the American people in its hour of trial and crisis. His utterance realized the true function of prayer, which is not to influence God to do our will but to qualify us to do His will. We lay bare our desires before God in order that we may cherish no desire that we cannot honestly ask a just and merciful God to fulfil. The President prayed not for mere military triumph, "not for the lust of conquest, but to end conquest." He prayed for victory, yes, but for "victory over the unholy forces of our enemy . . . the apostles of greed and racial arrogance," over the powers that our liturgy characterizes as the *"memshelet zadon"* the "dominion of arrogance." He prayed for what Israel has prayed for from time immemorial on the holiest days of the year, the coming of that era when all mankind would be "one united band doing Thy will wholeheartedly": "Lead us," the President prayed, "to the saving of our country and with our sister nations into a world unity that will spell a sure peace—a peace invulnerable to the schemings of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil. Thy will be done, Almighty God."

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMmittee has recently published part of its correspondence with the State Department in relation to the exclusion of Jewish citizens of the United States from immigration into Palestine. In a letter addressed to the State Department, Dr. John Slawson, executive vice president of the Committee, pointed out that this involves "an invidious discrimination against one class of American citizens" and "unquestionably would be obnoxious to the fundamental ideals of our Republic and contrary to its traditional policy." Gordon P. Merriam, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, wrote in reply that "the status of American citizens under the White Paper is the same as that of na-

tionals of countries which are members of the League of Nations. Any question moreover, of the emigration of American citizens to Palestine does not appear to be a pressing one . . . in view of present travel conditions." This reply is pointless. If other nations who are members of the League are subject to the same arbitrary and insulting discrimination by Great Britain between their Jewish and their Gentile citizens, that does not make such discrimination against American citizens legitimate. Let the nations affiliated with the League also protest. After all, the League of Nations never sanctioned the White Paper policy. As for the difficulties of transportation, they are, of course irrelevant to the principle at issue. Discrimination still remains discrimination. We therefore reiterate our suggestion made in a previous number of our magazine, that an American Jew endeavor to migrate to Palestine and test the legality of Great Britain's exclusion of Jewish American citizens from Eretz Yisrael.

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WITH THE WAR REACHING A climax, both the need and the opportunity of rescue work are heightened. In our country the question of how to provide for the refugees who manage to escape from Nazidom is receiving earnest attention. Their tragic plight arouses universal compassion. But the hearts of the men in the British Colonial Office are apparently impervious to compassion. They have it in their power to rescue immediately some 18,000 Jews by issuing to them the remaining number of permits which were set aside for refugees before the White Paper prohibition of further Jewish immigration went into effect. This they refuse to do. Why? In order that, by eking out these permits a few at a time, they may postpone as long as possible the issue of reconsidering the White Paper policy as a whole. For, as long as Jewish immigrants are still being admitted, the urgency for abrogating the White Paper can be denied. Meanwhile, if a mere 18,000 more Jews die because they cannot find a refuge near at hand, what is the death of 18,000 Jews that it should weigh against the convenience of the men in the British Colonial Office?

## RECONSTRUCTIONISM IN THIS ISSUE

We commented in our last issue on the general significance of the material included in our Literary Number from the viewpoint of Reconstructionism, how the literature under review demonstrates that Jewry is more than a religious denomination, that it is a people with a civilization of its own—Judaism. The same applies to the books reviewed in this issue. Attention is called particularly to the survey of recent Hebrew literature in America by Daniel Persky. As Reconstructionists we have a special interest in Hebrew literature. Our platform calls for an educational program that "should encourage the study and use of the Hebrew language as a means of maintaining the continuity of Jewish life and the integrity of the Jewish people."

The Jewish people exists and needs not apologize for its existence. It has a right to seek to perpetuate itself such as every individual or social organism has. But the right to exist still leave us with the need for a purpose or purposes to which our life shall be directed and which enables us to experience that life as worthwhile. That is where religion enters. It is the group's self-consciousness of what it is that makes its life worthwhile, of the role the people should play in the life of mankind. In the article by Rabbi Arzt on "Jewish Identity in the Modern World," we have an effort to define the goals that give value to Jewish life. We may not all accept Rabbi Arzt's definition of them, but there can be no question of the relevancy of his article to Judaism as a religious civilization, and of its conformity with the principles of Reconstructionism.

Rabbi Mortimer J. Cohen's paper is particularly illuminating in its discussion of the kind of religion needed in the modern world. Analyzing the types of religious experience revealed in some of the novels of our day, he criticizes the sort of religion that represents a despairing flight from the harsh realities of life and insists on the kind that can operate to transform and glorify life. That is the Reconstructionist conception of religion as formulated in our platform: "All Jews should seek a conception of God which . . . should inspire them with faith in the possibilities of human life and with the power to retain, in all vicissitudes of fortune, an unimpaired confidence in life's worth."

# Jewish Identity in the Modern World

By MAX ARZT

EVER since the French Revolution, we have been grappling with the need for redefining our relationship to the rest of civilized mankind. There was a time when Jews regarded their status with a sense of dignity. They considered themselves a people in exile among their oppressors, waiting for the day of redemption and restoration. They believed in the dawn of a brighter day, when humanity would show reverence to a people which would not surrender its soul nor compromise its conscience. After the French Revolution, we could not, in an era that spoke glibly of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," continue to declare ourselves to be aliens everywhere. We have therefore for over a century been a people in search of a definition. We have not yet determined whether we are to use the term race, religion, nation or culture to clarify the nature of our Jewish entity and identity. Until modern Jews discover their role in the modern world, they will continue to suffer maladjustment and they will not be in a position to make a significant contribution to the better world which is in the making.

### The Two Major Attitudes Toward Jewish Identity

As we survey what American Jews say and think, we can discern two major attitudes. There are those who believe that it is the Jew's duty and destiny to become *extinct* as an identifiable entity among the peoples of the world. They advocate a gradual process of assimilation leading to the slow, painless demise of Judaism. Theirs is a program of spiritual self-annihilation. They would give security to their children by subjecting them to a spiritual diet in which vitamins of Jewish life and experience are essentially lacking. They proclaim they are Caucasian by race. To them the vision of a restored Palestine is a nightmare. They observe the dietary laws in reverse, in that they ordain abstention from *kashrut*. As Americans of the Mosaic persuasion, they may yet give a periodic salute to their slippery faith for they are, to use Lewis Browne's phrase, "more goy-fearing than God-fearing." But by their emasculated Judaism they imply that all that the prophets, seers and sages of Israel thought, taught and proclaimed adds up to zero in its relevance to and significance for our times. Add to these proponents of gradual absorption the vast numbers of direct and unabashed assimilationists, and you will perceive a large segment of our people whose sole preoccupation as Jews is that of trying to be what they are not. Such an attitude toward Judaism is tantamount to a declaration of spiritual bankruptcy. No people can pay its debt to humanity by nihilistic disregard of its cultural assets.

A second proposed solution of the problem of Jewish identity in the modern world is a direct reaction to the negative program of Jewish *extinctionists*. It unequivocally asserts the Jew's right and duty to *survive* as a *distinct* recognizable entity among the peoples of the world. Jews are a historic people. We are here and we have a right to remain what we are. No individual need justify his existence before his fellow men so long as he lives and lets others live. Democracy welcomes the existence and persistence of diverse national and cultural groups. Hence no people need adduce proof of its *raison d'etre*. There is, indeed, something wholesome and self-respecting in this blunt affirmation that we need not apologize for our existence.

The survivalist philosophy is bold and defiant in polemics with those who are refugees from Judaism. It is forthright in its reply to our liberal friends of all faiths and of no faith who advise us to perform a disappearing act. It is cogent and compelling when it presses its claims for Palestine. The homelessness of millions of Jews is a stubborn fact. Their post-war return to and their rehabilitation in the lands of their origin is hampered by insurmountable psychological, economic and political impediments. Their soul seeks its roots in a soil and that soil is Eretz Yisrael. No amount of theorizing can remove the urgency of normalizing their life by settlement in their historic homeland. The return to Palestine is therefore the basic solution for those Jews who are aliens everywhere and at home nowhere. A restored Eretz Yisrael is a *sine qua non* of survival for untold numbers of Jews.

### The Inadequacy of Survival for Its Own Sake

But, if the philosophy of survivalism is convincing in its advocacy of the cause of the homeless and stateless Jews, it is inadequate as a stimulus for maintaining Jewish identity in a democracy like our own United States. The population of our country comprises many strands. No less than 46 races, ethnic groups and nationalities are represented in the constituency of the American people. Despite all the theorizing about cultural pluralism, about the rights of minorities to continue and further develop their own way of life, the process of assimilation goes on with unabated acceleration. In three or four generations the melting pot dissolves all minorities including the Welsh, the Swedes, the Italians, and even the Germans. Little more than a faint reminiscence is left, and there is no conscious resistance to assimilation. I remember clearly having addressed a Welsh church meeting in Pennsylvania at which a motion was unanimously passed to eliminate the last Welsh hymn from the church ritual. One of the oldest deacons of the Church, in sponsoring that resolution, explained that Welsh hymns had been a necessity only so long as the immigrant elements in the congregation had not been fully Americanized.

It is true that when members of a minority group with a contempt for their own mores and traditions speed the process of assimilation, they cause serious spiritual havoc. They bring about a vulgar imitation of the superficialities in the life of the dominant majority and a spurning of the spiritual and moral values that come with the minority culture. But nature does take its course. National minorities away from their homeland do not feel that they repudiate their ancestral past when they allow a natural process to merge their life with that of the land of their adoption and citizenship. Jewish survivalists who accentuate those aspects of Jewish life which made us a distinct minority group comparable to our fellow Americans of Polish, French, Belgian, and Slovak origin, forget that in a democratic society such distinctions are bound to disappear.

It is true, of course, that even Jews who are indifferent to the Jewish religion will not readily yield to full assimilation into the Christian church. They will as an initial step tend to take their place among the vast numbers of unchurched Americans, and their Jewish consciousness will at best be nurtured not by positive values, but by the persistence of social ostracism and the reluctance to substitute for Jewish religious indifference affiliation with one of the many forms of Christianity. For some generations to come, such Jews and their descendants will be Jews insofar as they will not be Christians, but they will be a group without a distinctive culture. Since human beings cannot

for long live in a religious vacuum, the eventual adoption of some form of the faith of the majority is by no means excluded as an ultimate development. To seek shade under the tree of cultural pluralism is therefore to be oblivious of the eventual stripping of the leaves that might offer temporary shelter.

Jewish identity will for a long time to come entail great hardship, and Jews will in one form or another face many discriminations. In the words of Sholem Aleichem, "It is hard to be a Jew." People will not court disabilities merely for the sake of group survival. Our ancestors would not have had the stamina to resist all offers of amalgamation, nor would they have manifested such miraculous vitality in a veritable den of lions, had their faith been based on the abstract principle of the right to be different. Likewise modern Jews will see no reason why they should expose themselves and their children to a vexing existence merely because Jews have a right to be *distinct*. People will make heroic and even joyful sacrifices for vital principles. But martrydom demands a cause not merely a logical case.

### Two Conditions for An Adequate Rationale

What then can be the rationale for the perpetuation of Jewish identity and the fullest development of Jewish group life in democratic lands. If Jewish life is to be creative it must fulfill two conditions. In the first place, it must reckon with the spiritual needs of the Jew as a human being. It must equip him with those inner resources which make life meaningful by endowing it with a sense of purpose and noble striving. It must enable him to give expression to the soul's greatest delights, to face peril with courage, and to meet bereavement with faith and fortitude.

No amount of communal organization and regional super-organization, no degree of intensity of Jewish group patriotism and pride of origin can provide the cosmic orientation which a personal religion and true piety offer. Judaism is abundantly rich in personal resources of the soul. Its liturgy is the outgrowth of sincere aspiration. Its religious observances and festive occasions are replete with stirring pageantry and sublime beauty. The widespread desuetude of these forms of Jewish life is due to the fact that Jewish education has stressed the science of Judaism rather than the art of Jewish living, that it has failed to reckon with the Jew as an individual with emotions, passions, fears and hopes. Our school system teaches prayer as "mechanical reading," and religious observances as being primarily the means of expressing group loyalty—as having survival value rather than spiritual value.

In the second place, modern Judaism must uncover and make explicit the universal import of Jewish particularism by revealing how a living Judaism can be a blessing to all mankind. We must take a global view of Judaism and always remember that the God of Israel is the God of the Universe. Jewish survival, or better still Jewish revival, is more than an expression of a group's will to live. It must be stimulated by a belief that Judaism, which has been tested in the crucible of suffering, can be a light unto all nations and all peoples.

Judaism has persisted throughout the ages because its adherents derived profound satisfaction from its way of life. It made life significant to them. That significance was greatly enhanced by a belief that Israel was entrusted by God with doctrines and a destiny by which it became an *"am segullah."* For nearly two centuries, after the Maccabean rebellion, this sense of cosmic duty expressed itself in a missionary activity which brought thousands of converts into the fold of Judaism. We have ample evidence of this

in ancient literature. Philo, in speaking of the success of Jewish religious propaganda, says, "For they lead after them and influence all nations, barbarians and Greeks, the inhabitants of continents and islands, the eastern nations and those in Western Europe and Asia, in short, the whole habitable world from one extremity to another." (De Vita Mosis II, 4:20.) Juvenal satirizes the Roman father who eats no pork and observes the Sabbath and worships only the heavenly God and whose son undergoes circumcision, despises the Roman laws and studies the Torah of the Jews. Strabo states that it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that has not admitted this tribe of men (the Jews) and is not possessed by it. (Ant. 14, 7, 2:115.) The New Testament speaks of the scribes and Pharisees who compass the sea islands to make one convert. (Matt. 23:15.) Rabbinic tradition tells us that Shemaya and Abtalion were proselytes and that Hillel, Rabbi Meir, and Rabbi Akiba were descendants of proselytes.

The advent of Christianity put an end to the process of direct proselytization and the activity of Paul and his successors absorbed most of the converts. But Jews did not relinquish their claim that they were a people with a divine message and mission for all mankind. They regarded themselves as the spiritually elect, not in any sense of temporal power or possession, but in that they were called upon to make the Torah incarnate in their life. They claimed possession of truths which would some day be so widely acknowledged that Zechariah's prophesy would be fulfilled. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew saying: We will go with you for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech. 8:23.)

Such a burning conviction of the universal significance of Judaism must possess modern Jews if they are to be a spiritually energizing influence in civilization. Our emergence from the physical ghetto and our cultural communication with the rest of civilized mankind will, we hope, be advanced with the impending victory of the United Nations. We must not, however, abdicate our historic responsibility as the custodians of spiritual values which offer a benediction to all mankind. Judaism can be a "light unto the nations" if we will bear that light in our individual and collective lives and if the light shines forth in all that we do and say. Our influence will be indirect—it will not be exerted by means of proselytization but will be manifest wherever Jews live as a community blessed of the Lord. We shall avoid all forms of personal and group superiority so long as we will regard our role in civilization with a deep sense of humility and a heightened sense of responsibility.

The rediscovery of the timeless and timely significance of the spiritual uniqueness of Judaism will redeem the Zionist movement from the charge that it aims to set up a small state which will be just another addition to the vexatious problem of small nations. The return of Jews to Palestine in numbers large enough to make possible an unhampered and culturally autonomous Jewish life will transform the Holy Land from a museum of religious antiquities and memories into a living laboratory of Jewish spiritual endeavor. It will bring the people of the prophets back to the land of the prophets. The Jews in the Diaspora will, of course, have no political ties with Eretz Yisrael, but they will regard it as the spiritual center of their faith even as they will strive to be its worthy representatives-at-large the world over. Palestine will be to universal Jewry, living in security and peace among their fellow citizens in all

lands, a kind of religious retreat to which they will resort for the intensification of their appreciation and awareness of the highest implications of living Judaism.

### Four Jewish Values of Universal Significance

I therefore proceed to enumerate four distinctive spiritual values which define Judaism's role in our time.

1. Judaism must help men recapture and restore the moral passion of religion. Morality is a magnificent obsession in Jewish tradition. Justice, equity, mercy and truth are the recurrent refrain in the Bible, the Talmud and all the literature that stemmed therefrom. Judaism insists on justice rather than on expedient, compromising adjustment which has been the great sin of contemporary humanity. Other religions, and surely the religions that stemmed from the tree of Judaism share this zeal for the right. But our age needs a fresh accentuation of the great conviction of the prophets and sages of Israel—that the moral law is as inexorable as the physical law in that neither can be violated with impunity. Judaism refuses to admit that this world is in the hands of demonic powers which have made the will of God impotent until apocalyptic times when the forces of good will be released and paradise will be regained. It sees in the agony of the world not the triumph of evil but evidence of the moral law. It affirms that when mankind stills the voice of conscience, it eventually meets with retribution, for if "the arc of the universe is long, it bends toward justice." It avers that an era of peace and brotherhood can be realized on earth and in this life by obeying the stern voice of duty and subjecting our personal and collective life to the rigid test of ethical consistency and constancy.

2. Judaism is distinctive for its theory of education. We have a Hebrew word for knowledge which is virtually untranslatable because its deepest and fullest meaning has not yet been grasped by other peoples and tongues. That word is Torah. By Torah, Jewish tradition did not mean essentially the disinterested acquisition of factual information or the cultivation of skills of the body and mind, or even the scholarly exploration of the multi-roomed mansion of worldly wisdom. All these were deemed desirable and necessary only in so far as they expanded the soul, stimulated the moral sensitivity of man, and were channeled in the direction of the promotion of human welfare. Thus Jeremiah declares (4:22-24), "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord who exercise mercy, justice and righteousness on the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Universal literacy is not moral intelligence. The three R's do not spell righteousness. Popular education in our day teaches young people how to make a living but it largely ignores the necessity of teaching them how to live and what to live for. Judaism can, in our time, make a significant contribution by bringing to bear its unrivaled tradition of the preeminence of Torah—the character-building, soul-cultivating emphasis in learning, which calls on man to develop ethical sensitivity, to master himself rather than to rule over others.

3. The third distinctive feature of Judaism stems from the first two and validates their primacy in Jewish tradition. Our religion goes beyond the formulation of universal postulates and idealistic ends. It translates the poetry of moral aspirations into the prose of every day life. It is a religion of behavior as well as of beliefs. Judaism evolved a complex halakic system. The halakic method

analyzes homely, mundane problems, even trivial instances and inquires how justice and mercy can be applied in these situations. The Talmud, which is the unique process and possession of Judaism, brings down the holy tablets from the heights of Sinai to the valley of decision and the plane of realization. It translates the Torah into life. No other religion reveals such a stubborn determination to govern life by tested and applied norms. Judaism can be described in the words of Wordsworth, as "pure religion breathing household laws." Whatever revision and further development the *halakah* may need, its method is one which makes for ethical concreteness and moral creativity; and of such a method our modern world is sorely in need. Consider the oft used term *democracy*. It remains essentially an inchoate, unapplied idea because, while it is the subject of public orations and the substance of popular slogans, so little has been done to translate this generalization into particular norms of behavior affecting not only government but also the home, the shop, the market place and the social conduct of man. Judaism's legal system harbors a "secret of the angels" which may yet spell salvation for mankind.

4. Finally, Judaism has a distinctive conception of the place of religion in human life. It is no revelation to the student of Hebrew to be told that the Hebrew language, even as developed in Rabbinic times, does not have a word for religion. For Judaism does not regard religion as a department of life, as an avocation in life, or even as an all-absorbing passion to dominate the life of a specially selected hierarchy. Judaism asserts that man fulfills himself only when he seeks to obey the will of God in his daily life and behavior. Hence every day, every moment of the day, offers precious opportunity for the worship of God, or, to use the vocabulary of our Rabbis, "for submission to the sovereignty of the King of the Universe." Judaism evolved a system of life which offers multiple opportunities for living in the light of God's presence, because man's soul is constantly in need of God even as his body is constantly in need of oxygen. The entire regimen of Jewish observance, far from constituting an ascetic discipline, is a means of investing our daily life with sanctity and hallowed significance. "Know Him in all thy ways" is the aim of the *mitzvot*, be they moral laws that govern our relations with our fellow men or the sanctified rites and rituals. They invite God into our lives and equate religion with life. To a generation which has made religion a sign of respectability, and worship a means of social conformity, Judaism proclaims that man must be the constant servant of God if he is to be released from bondage to man or to the passions of the mob.

Judaism must become again a way of adventurous living for Jews and a vehicle for transmitting to a searching humanity eternal values and life-giving verities. We will then find happiness in our Judaism, that happiness which was felt by our forbears and which is reflected in the ancient prayer, "How happy are we, how good is our portion, how sweet is our lot, how beautiful is our inheritance." A revitalized Judaism, manifest in the personal and collective lives of its adherents, will bring to realization the glowing words of Deuteronomy (4:6-8) "Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go in to possess it. Observe therefore and do thus; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, shall say surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as is this law which I set before you this day."

# Recent Outstanding Hebrew Books in America

By DANIEL PERSKY

WITH the destruction by the Nazis of the Jewish communities in Europe, the large centers of learning which had sustained the spirit of our people for generations were uprooted. Even modern Hebrew literature, whose main center, to be sure, had been transferred to Palestine, was still able to show various signs of creativity in the period between the two wars in Eastern European countries like Poland, Lithuania and Germany. But now, after the complete destruction of Jewish life effected by the Nazi hordes in those regions, the United States remains almost the only country in the Diaspora in which Hebrew literature shows a marked development.

During the last few years an energetic Hebrew literary activity has appeared in America. We already have a number of Hebrew magazines of note and influence: the weekly *Hadoar,* edited by Menahem Ribalow, now in its twenty-third year; the monthly *Bitzaron,* edited by Chaim Tchernowitz; now in its fifth year, the bi-monthly for youth, *Niv,* edited by Yaakov Kabakoff, now in its sixth year; the bi-weekly *Hadoar Lanoar,* edited by Daniel Persky, now in its tenth year; the pedagogic quarterly, *Shevile Hahinukh,* edited by Zevi Scharfstein, now in its fourth year; and the semi-annual, *Harofe Haivri,* edited by Moses Einhorn, now in its seventeenth year. There are also published the annual collective volume, *Sefer Hashanah Liyehude Amerika,* edited by Menahem Ribalow, and the periodical devoted to Jewish science, *Horeb,* edited by Pinkhos Churgin.

These publications provide spiritual satisfaction for a reading public of as high as twenty thousand regular subscribers. In the course of the years a group of talented Hebrew writers in the various fields has developed—story-writers, poets, scholars, publicists and journalists. These authors occupy an important place in present-day Hebrew literature, which is chiefly centered in Palestine.

In recent years a number of Hebrew publishing houses have arisen in America. The most important of these are: *Ogen,* publishing agency of the Histadruth Ivrith of America; the Hebrew Publication Society of Palestine and America (*Sefarim*); Shulsinger Bros.; *Shilo* House, directed by Professor Zevi Scharfstein, and the Hebrew Publishing Company, which specializes in text books and reference books. Moreover, many Hebrew books are published at the expense of the authors themselves, and are distributed by them.

The destruction of European Jewry, as well as the migration of many of its spiritual leaders to America and the general strengthening of national feeling, have been responsible for the tremendous awakening in American Hebrew letters during the last five years. Important books appear from time to time. The existing periodicals have been put on a firm basis and expanded, and new magazines have come into existence.

A noticeable rise is evident in the number of religious works published. Books on homiletics, *halakhah,* responsa and the like are quite popular, especially among rabbis, religious functionaries, teachers and scholars, whose number is on the increase. But it is especially gratifying to note that important Jewish literary treasures are being reprinted in America in fine editions. Suffice it to mention the reprinting of the Babylonian Talmud with the various commentaries (according to the Romm edition, Vilna) in twenty volumes. Other basic Jewish works, which no longer reach us from abroad because

of the war, are also appearing in new editions. The list includes: the *Mishnah, Yalkut Shimoni, Mesillat Yesharim* (by Moses Hayyim Luzzatto), *Shitah Mekubetzet* on the Talmud, *Sefer Haflaah, Drush v'Hiddush* by Rabbi Akiba Eiger; the classic Hasidic work, *Noam Elimelech;* the classic Kabbalistic work, *Eser Sefirot,* by Rabbi Isaac Luria;*Hidushe ha-Rashba;* a Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature by Marcus Jastrow; *Otzar ha-Sefarim* by ben Yaakov, etc. This leads us to conclude that American Jewry is beginning to come into its own and to provide for its own national cultural sustinance, availing itself of the spiritual fruits of our people throughout the ages.

Progress is also evident in the field of secular literature. It is my purpose to record only the most important works which have appeared during the last six months, and have in some way enriched our literary production.

As is well known, Hebrew literature in America excels in the field of Jewish Science, since many of our greatest scholars live in this country.

An important national cultural undertaking had been initiated by Jacob Neumann, formerly instructor of Talmud at the Hebrew Teachers College of Boston, who died in 1941. His aim was to simplify the study of the Talmud for young and old. He was able to translate into Hebrew the first three tractates of the Jerusalem Talmud: *Berakot, Pe'ah,* and *Megillah,* and one tractate from the Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Metzia.* There has now been published by the Hebrew Teachers College of Boston, the tractate *Berakot* from the Jerusalem Talmud, containing the text with a literal Hebrew translation and a short commentary. The book was printed in New York in a large and attractive format (170 pages). It should be noted that many scholars in previous generations, including Rabbi Israel Salanter, had hoped to translate the Talmud into Hebrew.

A second undertaking to popularize classic Jewish texts is the *Mishneh Torah (Yad ha-Hazakah),* by Maimonides, in a shortened version, edited according to manuscripts and old editions and issued in vowel-pointed Hebrew, together with an introduction and a commentary by Dr. Philip Birnbaum (Hebrew Publishing Co., New York). At the bottom of each page there are short explanatory notes in English. At the end of the book there is a dictionary of terms and concepts used by Maimonides and a list of the Biblical verses quoted in the *Mishneh Torah.* The book contains about 400 pages and is beautifully issued on fine paper. While this is an abridged version, it includes about twenty-five percent of the original. Many printer's errors have been corrected and the editing has been carefully done. The vowel points aid in reading the text according to grammatical rules.

Another volume dealing with one of our great figures is *Teshuvot Rashi,* in three parts, gathered from manuscripts and early halakhic works and published together with an introduction, notes and indices by Dr. Israel Elfenbein. The book, which contains annotations by Prof. Louis Ginzberg, is printed in New York and contains about 500 pages. It is certainly a work over which we ought to pronounce the *shehehiyanu.* For generations, scholars and rabbis have desired to learn about Rashi as a legalist, but with little success. After great difficulty, the author has completed an historic task by gathering all the available responsa by Rashi, which will now serve as a guide for students of the law. It should be noted that Rashi tended to be lenient in his legal decisions in order to make life pleasant for the Jew.

A notable popular work of interest to every rabbi, student and reader is *ha-*

*Mussar v'ha-Mishpat b'Yisrael* by Dr. S. Federbusch (Ogen, New York, 241 pages). This is a concise book, divided into well-balanced chapters and written in a simple and pleasant style. Whoever seeks an exposition of Jewish ethics on the basis of a scientific use of the Biblical and Talmudic sources will find it in this book, which is practically without parallel in our literature.

Another book which is the first of its kind in Hebrew literature is *Ha-Luah ha-Ivri* by L. Leideker (published by Tekufot, New York, 152 pages). Various articles have been written in Hebrew about the Jewish calendar, as is to be seen from the bibliography, but this is the first time that we have a special work on this subject explaining its principles and calculations, together with notes, references and tables. The book is written in the form of rules and short principles. It is remarkable how such an involved subject becomes clear even for the beginner and uninitiated.

A timely and original work is *Kitbe Bikkoret Historit* by Dr. Aaron Kaminka, (published by Sefarim, New York, 276 pages). The author, one of our oldest Hebrew writers, has gathered in this book his studies on personalities and themes in the Bible (Elijah, Ecclesiastes), Talmudic times (Hillel, Shammai, Josephus), the Middle Ages (Saadia Gaon, Yehudah Halevi, Maimonides), etc. There are also included his well-known articles on the life of Moses, the fate of the Jewish people, the Maccabees, the system of Ahad Ha'am, the future of Judaism, the Christian legend, etc. Dr. Kaminka is known for his radical ideas, which are usually opposed to our accepted concepts. But even if we do not agree with his daring views, we find him second to none in stimulating our interest and thinking.

The well-known Zionist leader and thinker Dr. Solomon Goldman, has contributed his book *Am, Olam v'Eretz,* translated into Hebrew by S. Halkin (published by Ogen, New York, 251 pages). This is a collection of the essays and studies of the author on Judaism and the Jewish question. These writings constitute a significant contribution to our national thought. Historically and critically the author examines the various problems that have been facing us for the last generation—*galut,* the function of the rabbi, the aim of Judaism, religious reform, the White Paper, etc.—and comes to the only possible solution: Zionism. The author takes the opponents of the national idea to task and is especially critical of the assimilationists in their various manifestations. This is a book written with unusual frankness, with national pride and boundless love for Judaism.

The volume entitled *Kitve Yitzhak Beaber,* contains Biblical researches, historical essays and articles on education. It is edited by Daniel Persky and was published by the widow of the author (New York, 186 pages). The author, who was an instructor in the Hebrew High School, died in 1941. Previously he had gone to Palestine, where he taught in the settlements of Galilee, and then returned to New York. With great diligence he applied himself to Biblical research and began to issue in Tel Aviv a "Popular Bible" with modern punctuation and arrangement. The present work contains penetrating studies of Micah and Jeremiah, as well as portraits of most of the prophets. The author possessed a strong imagination and a fine historical sense, and was able to enter into the life of the First Commonwealth and to know the thought and feelings of our ancestors. This is a book which combines great knowledge with deep understanding. The number of Hebrew books on the Bible is so few, that this fine work deserves our greatest commendation.

In the field of *belles-lettres* there have

recently appeared four books with which I shall have to deal briefly.

*Sefer ha-Mahazot* by Harry Sackler, (Ogen, New York, 416 pages). The author is a well-known dramatist and novelist in Yiddish, English and Hebrew who always draws the themes for his works from our past. With great talent he brings to life historical incidents and personalities which have long been forgotten. This is his first Hebrew book and it contains nine of his plays, written in his learned and fine Hebrew style. The plays afford interesting reading material also because of their psychological treatment of character and historical events.

*Al ha-Lehem Levado* by Hayyim Abramowitz (Kadimah, New York, 208 pages). This book is a pleasant surprise. The author is a young man who came to America in his childhood. He was graduated from the Teachers' Institute of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York and was one of the founders and active members of *Histadrut Hanoar Haivri.* He previously published a number of short stories in the youth publication *Niv* and also in *Hadoar.* He has now presented us with a complete novel (only a few Hebrew novels have thus far appeared in America), which depicts in realistic and vivid colors the influence of the depression of 1928 on the life of the Jewish worker in New York. The novel is interesting reading material and, notwithstanding its minor stylistic faults, attests that we can expect much from the author, who is an American product.

The well-known critic and essayist, Abraham Epstein, has recently favored us with his new work, *Mikarov u'Merahok,* (Ohel, New York, 262 pages). The book contains essays on the Song of Songs and on Ruth, as well as articles on some of our foremost writers in Palestine. But the main contribution of the book lies in the fact that it is mostly given over to American Hebrew authors: story-writers, poets and essayists. Epstein has demonstrated here too his fine qualities. He interprets the characteristic qualities of each author with understanding. His poetic style, clear presentation and direct approach to the subject are instructive and edifying.

I cannot, of course, pass judgment on Daniel Persky's *Zmanim Tovim,* which contains feuilletons and short pieces on the various festivals.

The field of Hebrew textbook literature is a comparatively rich one. A number of books appear each year with the aim of teaching our language, Bible and history to beginners. A recent textbook is worthy of especial attention: *Hasifrut Vehahayyim* by H. M. Rothblatt, part two (Hebrew Publishing Co., New York, 406 pages). This is a reader for the secondary schools. The work has two innovations: almost half of the material deals with the general and Jewish scene in America (Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, New York, the B'nai B'rith, Emma Lazarus, Felix Warburg, etc.), in articles, stories and poems, and this is the first time that most of the Hebrew writers in America are represented in any volume. The attempt of *Hasifrut Vehahayyim* to portray America has succeeded. It demonstrates that we already have enough talents to furnish the material for readers, anthologies and the like.

In America there have appeared from time to time important Hebrew collective volumes. But no volume of this kind has made such a powerful impression as the *Ahisefer* (Louis LaMed Foundation for the Advancement of Hebrew and Yiddish Literature, edited by Shmuel Niger and Menahem Ribalow, New York, 385 pages). The volume is devoted to studies in the literature and languages of the Jews, to short stories and especially to translations from Yiddish poetry. Thirty-

three Yiddish poets, from S. S. Frug to Chaim Grade are presented in Hebrew translation. Worth noting among the articles are the long and detailed monograph by Menahem Ribalow on Hebrew literature in America during the last twenty-five years and the parallel essay by Shmuel Niger on Yiddish literature in America. The volume is a product of the movement for better understanding between Hebrew and Yiddish literature.

The new issue (Volume 1, 1944) of the semi-annual Hebrew medical journal, *Harofe Haivri,* edited by Dr. Moses Einhorn, is entirely dedicated (200 pages) to the late poet, Dr. Saul Tchernichovsky, who died recently in Jerusalem and was a physician by profession. Appreciations of the poet are contributed by the foremost Hebrew writers in America and articles on his terminology and activities are written by various medical men.

Two new quarterlies have recently appeared: *Talpiot* and *Rivon Katan. Talpiot,* which is dedicated to Jewish law and ethics, is edited by Rabbi Samuel K. Mirsky and Samuel L. Sar, associate. The first two issues (Tishri, Tebet 5904), include contributions by leading rabbis and scholars. The style is modern and each issue contains about 200 pages.

*Rivon Katan,* a small quarterly of poetry and thought, is issued by the Hebrew Poetry Society of America and is edited by Abraham Regelson. This quarterly, of 128 pages, appears in a small and handy format. Most of the material is contributed by the editor himself, who is considered an excellent poet and essayist. His essays on Walt Whitman and Solomon ibn Gabirol are characterized by his usual qualities: philosophical depth, poetic enthusiasm and original ability of expression.

# Religion in Some Current Novels

By MORTIMER J. COHEN

THAT religious values color every phase of life is a truism. What is equally true is that religious values, when they are absent from life, leave an emptiness which is filled by lesser and tawdry things, leaving men but hollow, empty shells. Some expressions of religion may be of such a nature as to satisfy men in an unhealthy manner, helping them to escape from life, its tasks and its responsibilities. Then again, a religion that is primitive may satisfy the innate sense of mystery that seems to be part and parcel of the very nature of human beings, but otherwise be fruitless.

What most concerns every religious person is whether the values he asociates with religion are real values, that is, whether they are real as the table in the room is real. Or are religious values the inventions of men, the artifacts that man's imagination has created to ease his way through the harsh and rocky realities of life? Is God, the source of all men's values, a figment of man's mind, a great and noble and inspiring figment to be sure, but an illusion that men hug warmly to their bosom to give comfort in sorow, surcease from pain and disappointment, or cherish because it provides an escape from the heavy pressures of life's immediacies?

## The Novel As a Reflection of Religious Attitudes

All these questionings concerning religion and the reality of its values may be discovered in the most democratic literature that men and women read so avidly

these days—the novel. The novel is the most democratic of all forms of literature, precisely because it deals with life, with men and women who must face life, seeking to discover significance in their struggles, their successes, their failures, in their loves, hates, conflicts, and even in death. The novel, moreover, is the easiest form of literature for the so-called average person to comprehend. Poetry and drama require some training and skill; they are highly technical literary forms. Biography and history appeal to more limited groups of readers; the essay to a still smaller group.

Thus, the novel is a democratic mirror. It seeks to fill a leisure hour with the entertainment of a tale, and men from time immemorial have delighted in hearing tales told. The current novel especially reflects life's experiences. Nothing is taboo to it. The novelist writes of all men in all stations of life; he probes into the hearts and souls of his characters, and reveals what he finds there. He creates human beings, and like a god he secretly guides destinies, meanwhile giving enlargement of understanding, sympathy and enjoyment to those who read.

Inevitably, since religion and its values permeate every nook and corner of life, the novel reflects, mirror-like, the religious trends of the time when it is written. In the novel we find all kinds of religious experiences and religious beliefs, from the most primitive to the most intellctual and ethical; the novel also betrays, by the absence of religious values, the sterile lives of people for whom life has no richer meaning beyond that of the daily task, the daily pleasure, the personal sorrow, the immediate frustration.

Our times, in many respects so confused and so confusing, are reflected in almost every novel that one reads these days. Our religious beliefs and non-beliefs are found in these books. And the more popular the novel, the more likely is it to be true to what the masses of men and women feel and think about the life about them and especially about the religious values that give life its supreme meaning, and emphasize its supreme worth. Popular novels are not necessarily the best novels, nor the ones most likely to achieve a permanent place in the history of literature. But they are the truest mirrors of what the common man and the common woman are most concerned about.

Unfortunately, the novels that deal directly with religious themes are not always the most convincing of religious values. Their authors seem consciously to make use of people's religious interests, even exploit them. And, consequently, some of the novels that are consciously religious stories leave one with little of what people really feel and believe about religion. Book-shelves are crowded with these religious novels. *The Robe, by Lloyd* Douglas, is too clever; it leaves one not with a heightened religious glow, but with a sense of the author's shrewdness in manipulating an old fable. *The Keys of the Kingdom,* by A. E. Cronin, is too eager to attack organized religion, and uses the cheap device of a fake miracle to expose the Church's limitations. *The Song of Bernadette,* by Franz Werfel, superior to most novels that deal directly with a religious theme, makes religion too dependent upon the extraordinary, upon the miraculous, upon the supernatural to leave with the reader the assurance that religion can be met in the ordinary, the law-abiding experience of life. Sholem Asch's *The Nazarene* and *The Apostle* are so pretentious in their learning, so eager to win the favorable attention of Christian readers that what should be inspiring leaves one crushed under a mountain of words, panting for the breath of real life.

What people really think and feel about

religion cannot be found in these artificial novels, thesis-novels. Religion, like beauty, is captured unawares. Only by indirection, rather than by direct assault, can religion, as it actually plays its role in the common life, be discovered. In such widely popular novels as *So Little Time,* by John P. Marquand, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,* by Betty Smith, and *Arrival and Departure,* by Arthur Koestler, the religious values of our current world are truly, though to a large extent unconsciously, reflected.

### Religion in "So Little Time"

No truer picture of our times during these past twenty-five years has been painted than the one found in Marquand's *So Little Time.* One does not wonder after having read it that the author had to turn to the book of Ecclesiastes for the inspiration of his title, and for some telling passages in his book. The dominant mood of this past quarter of a century, between two terrible world wars, was that of futility. Life seemed to have no purpose other than to attain wealth, position, power. Men lived under an almost fatalistic sense of another war coming, which they could do little to prevent. The immediate conclusion, under such circumstances, could only be to enjoy life as best one could.

Marquand has created a crowded gallery of people, none of whom is morally bad or wicked; they are, as a matter of fact, very delightful people, very likeable people. But they are so utterly futile and such meaningless and silly people. Their lives are crowded with tinsel and trinkets, whether it be a diet-fad or a joggle-board. They flutter about and are all in a bother over inconsequentialities. The sap of life runs low in them. Yet they are like so many people we meet in evedyday life.

The main character of the novel is Jeffery Wilson. Through his eyes, we get a glimpse of that world that nowadays seems so dead. He himself was but a trifle better than the hollow people about him. Perhaps, due to his failure as a playwright, he was more consciously frustrated. But his most poignant feelings were aroused only when the present war broke out and his son was caught up in its fiery whirlpool. It was then that life became very intense and very real to him, and made him think more acutely of the world he lived in.

The author's delightful satire makes us laugh at the sillinesses and foibles of these people, but we cannot grow angry at them, we cannot even pity them; they are too much like ourselves. We can see them for what they are, just nice people who live useless, meaningless, futile lives, who become pathetic when they are dragged into the cauldron of war, who have no resources with which to face the emergencies of life.

Throughout the whole length of this book, with but a passing reference to the boyhood of Jeffery Wilson, religion plays absolutely no part in the lives of these people. There is no talk of it, there is no interest in it, there is no concern about it. Religion is totally absent from the pale light of their minds and hearts. And the spiritual emptiness of outraged nature is cluttered up with joggle-boards, movie scripts, orange juice diets, liquor, night-clubs, country-houses and made-over farms.

Only at the very end, after his son has left for the war, Jeffery Wilson experiences a sense of loneliness, a sense of inner emptiness, a complete personal inadequacy to face life. Chancing to be near Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, although he was not a Catholic, he wandered into the quiet shadows of the edifice, not knowing what else to do.

"It seemed to him," runs the story,

"that there had been too much travel, too much talk, too much noise, for a long while too much of everything. Inside Saint Patrick's he might be quiet for a few minutes, absolutely quiet" (p. 593).

Here is the end and goal of religion—quiet; to get away from life, with its demands, its tasks, its problems—this is what religion adds up to! Surely, a society in which religion is no more than a flight from reality, an escape into the shadows, is a society that has missed something. Religion must be a moral power to help men transform themselves, their world, their ways of life; such was the religion known to the great creators of religion, to the Hebrew prophets, to the teachers of religion through the ages. Rob a society of its religious dynamic and the hollow world of Jeffery Wilson results.

### Religion in "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn"

In *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,* Betty Smith has created real people living in a very real world, a world easily recognizable by those who have shared that experience. Whereas Marquand is interested in the so-called upper levels of Society, Miss Smith is interested in the lowly poor, the immigrant who had at least the incentive of personal advancement to keep his sense of reality alive.

The whole gamut of life is displayed here. The miserable poor, the ambitious, the immoral, the weak-willed, the strong-minded, the failures, the successes—all march through these pages like the real persons they are supposed to depict. They are earthy people; they are simple, honest, and for the most part industrious. They have a great faith in America, in the possibility of the common man's rising to higher places on the ladder of society, in the value of education as a means to achieve personal ends.

When their religious experiences are discussed, they are found to be utterly irrelevant to life, yet satisfying in a strange way. Their religion appeals to the sense of mystery within them. If that religion became a dynamic that would move a man to transform his environment, if it helped him to remake himself, then it might become an ethical and moral power that could transcend his environment and his personal and social limitations. But, what if it remained merely the titulation of his sense of the numinous, as the vague, cloudy, misty nebulous aura that surounds the whole fact of life? Is not such religion frittered away, and does it not become like a stream that wanders off into a hot desert, there to perish?

The old grandmother, Mary, urged her daughter, Katie, to read to her children every night from the pages of the Bible. And so every night Katie Nolan read to her children, especially to the little heroine of the tale, Francie, from the Bible. But, the reason for reading the Bible is the interesting matter in point. It was not for religious or moral instruction. "So the child will grow up," said Grandmother Mary, "knowing of what is great—knowing that these tenements of Williamsburg are not the whole world" (p. 73). It was an exercise in the use of imagination. Religion, as it is found in the Bible, otherwise was totally irrelevant to the concerns of character or the problems of life.

When her father died, Francie came up against the fact of life as tragedy. The first shock of her father's death shattered Francie's faith in God (pp. 266-7). Later, however, when she sat in the darkened Church, as the priest intoned the service for the dead in Latin prayers which she did not understand, her mind was filled with the aroused sense of the mystery of life, of that something that is beyond and above man, of the vastness of what lies

beyond the infinitesimal little that men can grasp of life. Then she mused to herself: "It's a beautiful religion, and I wish I understood more. No! I don't want to understand it all. It's beautiful because it's always a mystery, like God Himself is a mystery. Sometimes I say that I don't believe in God. But I only say that when I'm mad at Him. . . . Because I do! I do!" (p. 359).

Thus, religion is an experience like the aesthetic experience of beauty. It is something that lends warmth and glow to life. But, it must not be understood. It must dwell in the realm of death and dark mystery. It can be satisfied by words read from a sacred Book, even though the meaning of the words escape the reader. Religion is like a soothing bath in warm water, at the end of a long, tiring day. It refreshes the soul, though it gives no nourishment on which to thrive and grow.

Religion does have this office to perform. It is good to have an anodyne of the spirit. Chloroform is needed for the body in moments of pain; morphine relieves the tortured mind, so that it can get needed sleep. But man cannot live on morphine alone; nor can he rely upon chloroform to do the world's work. Nor can he live by the mysteries of religion, as too many of our religious people like to do. It is a shelter from the storm, but what shall men do when the storm has passed?

Religion, surely, must be something other than an escape from life's excitements into the quiet of a darkened Cathedral; religion must offer more to struggling humanity than an anodyne of the spirit to relieve the pain of life. The poet well sang that "Life is real, life is earnest." And our world is crowded with problems that demand the best in men to master and solve. Religion, if it is to be useful, must be a resource of unfailing energy and strength, a well of wisdom and understanding, a fortress against the battalions of evil, a great energizer with which to transform the world into a place of justice and truth and peace.

The religion of Jeffery Wilson in *So Little Time* and that of Francie Nolan in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* leave one with the feeling that religion is an unreal growth; its roots, planted in the shallow, surface soil of man's life, seem to be inadequate to sustain its weight. To know religion as a great dynamic, man must believe that religion is rooted in the very realities of the cosmos, that God is part of his very make-up, that He is web and woof of his being. And all the ideals that flow from religion—freedom, the equality of men, democracy, peace—are realities by which men live, and by which alone they can live. These are not illusions! These are as real as the earth on which we walk, as the bread we put into our mouths, as the cool water which quenches our thirst.

### Religion in "Arrival and Departure"

In *Arrival and Departure,* by Arthur Koestler, we find a brilliant discussion of the reality of the moral and spiritual forces of life. Through his hero, Peter Slavek, the author disposes of the belief, so widely held by materialistic scientists, that if we could understand what makes the mind work, we could understand everything. If we could understand what made Peter Slavek courageous, we could understand the nature of all the spiritual qualities of man.

The psychoanalyst probes into Peter Slovak's past and discovers his repressions, his compulsions, his unexpiated sins, and by these Peter Slovak's bravery is presumably explained. Dr. Bolgar sums up the materialistic scientist's point of view neatly in these words: "What after all was courage? A matter of glands, nerves, patterns

of reactions conditioned by heredity and early experiences. A drop of iodine less in the thyroid, a sadistic governess or over-affectionate aunt, a slight variation in the electrical resistance of the medullary ganglions, and the hero becomes a coward, the patriot a traitor" (p. 107).

From this standpoint all ideals are illusions. "Are you not glad that I opened your eyes? What were your beliefs? Illusions! Your search for fraternity? A wild goose chase! Your courage? Vanity! Your loyalty? Atonement!" In a word, to explain anything is to explain it away.

Peter had all things made clear to him. But, despite his opportunity to escape from Europe seething in blood and war to free America where his beloved one awaited him and a new and free life beckoned him, he rejected everything and returned to the underground to fight the good fight for freedom and justice, for his fellowmen who still remained under the Nazi yoke, even though he knew he would forfeit his life in returning.

That seemingly irrational act, the materialistic scientist could not explain. There logic failed; there reason could not follow. "All her (Dr. Bolgar's) logic could not interfere with the peace which seemed to emanate from a source beyond her reach, from the very core of his self" (p. 168).

Koestler utilizes the story of the Garden of Eden to convey his fundamental belief. Adam gave up his paradise, but he acquired an innate value—he now knew the meaning of right and wrong. Death stands at the farther end of his choice, but Adam had the power to choose between right and wrong. Men, like Peter Slavek, have courage because they have within them a moral sense, the sense of right and wrong. When they choose the right and determine to see it through to its fulfilment, they must follow it, though it brings them death as its reward. There lies the root of men's courage; there grows the root of all of men's ideals; there is the reality that makes man a spiritual being created in the image of his God.

As the story closes, Peter Slavek floats down from an airplane over Germany through the dark night into the underground. Now his courage rose from a deeper source, the source of conscious devotion to a great ideal.

". . . The first time he had set out in ignorance of his reasons; this time he knew them, but understood that reasons do not matter so much. They are the shell around the core; and the core remains untouchable. . . ." (p. 168).

When Peter wrote to Odette in America, he ended his letter with the prophecy of a reborn religion, perhaps a new sense of religion, indeed of a new conception of God. "I'll tell you my belief, Odette. I think a new God is about to be born. That is the kind of thing one is only allowed to say at certain moments; but this is the moment, because in a few moments I shall depart. . . . Praise to the unknown god!" (p. 179).

Had Koestler known the history of religion better, certainly the Jewish religion, he would have known that the new God was really the old God of Israel, and the new religion was the old religion of the Torah. "Behold, I set before thee this day good and evil, life and death. Choose thou the good and live! saith the Lord."

* * *

In our world we need that kind of religion. It is the religion which has the power of salvation. It is the religion of redemption. It is the spiritual dynamic that can change the world, level its mountain-like barriers which prevent mankind from moving into an order of righteous living and justice and true peace.

# Miscellaneous Book Reviews

*TESTAMENT TO DEMOCRACY, by the Right Hon. Lord Wedgwood. Ad Press, Ltd., New York,* 1943; *pp.* 349. $3.75. *All profits from the sale of this book go to the establishment of a Wedgwood Canteen for Alied troops overseas.*

WHEN Josiah Wedgwood died in August, 1943, at the age of seventy-one, he left behind him a varied and vigorous political career. Over a period of forty years he served Britain as Privy Councillor, Judge, Minister of State, founder of the British Labor Party and parliamentarian. But if one were to judge by this book his favorite political institution is the British Parliament.

Wedgwood portrays the British Parliament as the most perfect political instrument man has evolved in his striving towards self-government. Wedgwood presents Parliament as a distillation of the best in British political experience. It has traveled the road of political vicissitude close to seven hundred years, he recalls. It has called to its service the ablest men in Britain's public life. It has fixed upon these men not only high standards of political competence but scrupulous standards of personal integrity. It has served Britain in peace and war and now, as it faces new tests—the test of efficiency, the test of comparative achievement with other political institutions—Wedgwood has no fears for its future.

His devotion to the British parliamentary system grows out of his faith in men and reason. The degree of excellence in government he says, is measured by "how far the government enables the governed to do without it." "Government," he quotes Godwin, "is but a necessary evil." It is the function of government to enable the subject to become master of his destiny. The worthiest of parliamentary tasks is the function of teacher to the electorate—to make them politically aware of the potency of bureaucrats, to make them politically sensitive to the forces of fascism in government or out.

Wedgwood views Parliament as the supreme political guardian of British liberties. He notes with disfavor the increasing encroachments of bureaucratic control in the British Government. Evidences of that bureaucracy he finds in the administrative and legislative powers of the Ministries, in the rigidity of party controls, in the almost dictatorial powers of the British Prime Minister, in the tragic ineptitude of the Colonial Office, and in the petty but dangerous bureaucracy of the British police.

"It is my impression," he says, "an impression shared and fostered by the British Union of Fascists, that our impartial British police were before the war becoming pronouncedly pro-Fascist, anti-Communist and even anti-Semitic." Note, he adds, that control of the police rests in the British Home Office. "Herein," says Wedgwood, "lies one of the greatest dangers to our democracy. If the anti-democrats capture the police and instill in them dislike of parliamentary control . . . then, we too, like the French, may see our servants become our war masters."

Wedgwood draws a sharp line of political distinction between the functions of Parliament and the functions of government. Government "executes by force," Parliament "restrains by reason." "A free Parliament is not a machine for making laws." It is a machine for preventing government from making laws. It is the only check upon the Departments except for the critical appraisal offered by the press. The great virtue of Parliament is its function of criticism and debate. The only check upon bureaucratic inefficiency or political corruption is its exposure to Parliamentary questioning or to the glare of a free press. Parliament is the rule of reason curbing the rule by force.

If a criticism were to be offered of Wedgwood's concentrated devotion to the British Parliament, it would be that he invests it as an institution with a halo of perfection—or rather that he bestows a position of primacy upon Parliament as the guardian and savior of the democratic system. It is illusory to put all one's faith in a single political instrument and make it the hallowed object of worship. Political institutions are the creatures of human experience. The British Parliament was born in 1266 out of the rebellions of lesser landlords and town merchants against the existing crown taxation. In 1400 this alliance between the gentry and the merchant class extended Parliamentary power to include the appointment of a king who was not by hereditary right the next in succession. And in 1689 the Whig bourgeoisie endowed Parliament with complete control of all national finance.

The British Parliament has survived almost seven hundred years because it has responded to popular pressures and because it has served the British people in their expanding political, social and economic wants. It is not Parliament, but the British people that can save and enhance their own democracy. It is not Parliament that stirs the British people at this moment in their will for a better economic order. It is the reflected or articulated voices of men who will return from the battlefields. It will be their job to force on Parliament the legislative task of reshaping Britain's post-war economy to their pattern.

But lest I distort Wedgwood's hopes for democracy into an equivalence with parliamentary vigilance, let me take due note of the lesser half of his "treatment." Here Wedgwood moves into the larger areas of democratic life and action. He probes into the problems of educational reform; he advances bold proposals for land taxation; he posits a future British prosperity on a financial union with the United States; he urges a Federal Union of states, not only for currency and credit control, but for international controls of military and political power. But perhaps the most pertinent chapter for us is the one entitled: "Fitting in Hitler's Subhumans." The "subhumans" are the Hitler-created category of non-Aryans. They are Britain's wards in South Africa and Kenya, in Malaya and Ceylon, in India and Palestine. This chapter is a stinging rebuke of the individuals and policies that govern the British Colonial Office. There is a strange incongruity between the political humanitarianism of a Josiah Wedgwood and the current inhuman *Realpolitik* that emanates from Britain's Colonial Office. For Josiah Wedgwood the "subhumans" in Africa, in India and in Palestine all have capacities for self-government and it is Britain's task—the task of Colonial policy—to bring them into the sphere of eventual independent statehood. Jews have performed miracles in Palestine, to quote Wedgwood, "in the teeth of the bitterest opposition from the British administration both in London and in Palestine." And Wedgwood issues a stern warning to Britain against this anti-Jewish policy. If storm troopers ever appeared in Palestine it would be the signal for an Arab uprising not only against the Jews but against the British, he says. Twenty-five years of British policy in Palestine have ended in complete failure. "We know now that nothing will induce either the Arab or the Egyptian to fight for us."

The high water mark in British imperialism, as Max Lerner recently pointed out, rests in Great Britain's relations with Canada, New Zealand and Australia, not her relations with India which are a tragic failure or with Singapore, which led to military disaster. Colonialism or mandatory relations must both rest on the enduring principle of partnership among equals and not on the suppression of "subhumans."

At this hour when Jewish hopes in Palestine are dimmed by British intransigence there is a lesson in political strategy for us Jews, in the life and career of Josiah Wedgwood. For more than two decades he pleaded the cause of human rights and Jewish equities in Palestine. Until practically the day of his death he upbraided and challenged fellow Britons for their inaction on the White Paper. He died, having failed to stir the British conscience, as his own had been stirred. But if there is failure in Wedgwood's life, it is the failure of a solitary voice pitted against the power of more numerous voices and more vociferous causes clamoring for attention in the political confusion of Britain at war.

A hundred Wedgwoods pleading our cause, with his intrepid and unfailing zeal, might have done the job that a single Wedgwood failed to achieve. But before we can have a hundred Wedgwoods, we must have a million staunch and unfailing Zionist Jews. That job is ours. *"Im en ani li mi li."* "If I am not for myself who will be for me?"

LEOPOLD J. SNEIDER

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*THE MIDDLE EAST: Crossroads of History, by Eliahu Ben-Horin. W. W. Norton & Company, New York.* $3.00, 248 pp.

THE author offers his book as an introductory sketch of the political scene in the Middle East for the benefit of the American reader who is not sufficiently enlightened on the subject. In recent years, several volumes have appeared about this region, the books of Kohn, Bovery, Monroe, and Baker. The political aspect of the war has been well reported in a book by A. Michie. Mr. Ben-Horin gives a journalist's re-write of such material in the brisk and witty manner of a lecturer.

Passing over minor lapses in the descriptive parts, let us turn to the author's own contributions to the discussion of the subject under consideration: namely, those dealing with the future of the Middle East and particularly with the problem of Palestine.

There is no doubt that the attempt to view the problem of the Middle East as a whole is valuable, but it is very doubtful whether the suggestion that the peoples of the Middle East be put under international trusteeship has any chance of success. This, not so much because of the difficulties inherent in the establishment of an effective and reliable trusteeship, but because, for good or for evil, the peoples of the Middle East have already come into their own politically, and will not be persuaded to give up their statehoods. Nor is there any indication that the "West" would consider any solution along these lines. For, once we accept this idea of enlightened guidance of backward peoples by benevolent trustees, it would be reasonable to apply such a solution in the "West" as well as in the "East." If such were the case, we would get pretty close to putting most of the world under trusteeship. However, the idea does not appear workable except in such countries as are at present under colonial regimes.

The author believes that the problem of Palestine can be solved by transfer of population, i.e., by an exodus of the Arabs of Pales-

tine to the rich country of Iraq which is indeed badly in need of settlers.

This pat solution could hardly be achieved by anything short of powerful international pressure on Arab leadership which, once forced to give up Palestine, might consent to the transfer of the Arabs of Palestine to the congenial atmosphere of an Arab state. It is very doubtful whether the world is ready for such clean-cut final decisions for Palestine. This return to Zangwill's idea of an Arab trek out of Palestine implies the admission that state and nation are synonymous, or at least that Zionism finds the Arab question insoluble. Neither of these premises will seem acceptable. That Jews should proffer this as the only feasible solution would appear as a counsel of despair. Mr. Ben-Horin, of course, offers his plan within the framework of his wider scheme for international planning and administration, and only as part of that scheme could such a transfer be considered at all.

In any case, he slices out a free "living space" for a Jewish state. But the Jews will not qualify for immediate independence because "the Jews as a people have not led the life of a self-governing nation for two thousand years and their ability for self-government is atrophied." To anyone who knows the life of the Yishuv this would appear as a misrepresentation, and to anyone who realizes that the phrase comes from the pen of a man in the inner circle of Revisionist Zionism, it may serve as a measure of the frustration and bitterness of a militant minority. Or can it be the journalist's quest for a scoop, the same one which discovered that the transfer agreement (under which Jews could extricate from Germany some of their property in German goods) was the source of German financing of Middle Eastern propaganda?

The pages on what might have happened if Hitler had taken different routes for the blitz are apparently remnants of an older scoop, and hardly add to the effect of a thought-provoking little volume.

MOSHE PERLMANN

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*THE OUTSIDE LEAF, by Ben Field. Reynal & Hitchcock.* 1943, *pp.* 237.

AS a young boy, Ben Field used to carry a little note-book in his pocket, in which he recorded interesting Yiddish phrases, especially those he heard from his mother. The content of his writing was naturally drawn from the environment and experience of a normal New York City Jewish boy. At the age of sixteen he began to work on farms. His environment and experiences changed and new material entered his prose and poetry. His first book of short stories, "The Cock's Funeral," published in 1937, was about farm life. Recently there appeared his first novel, "The Outside Leaf," which is a story about a Jewish family of farmers in the Connecticut tobacco country.

Mr. Field's use of the earthy and picturesque language is not limited to any environment. He continues his translation from the Yiddish. He introduces also references to Midrashic literature when suited to the character. And since the background of the story is laid among people who use a lewd slang, this language of the American *amha-aretz* found in the city as well as in the country (and now in the Army), produces a rich, stylistic mixture of the homely, the scholarly and the vulgar. Some may consider it over-rich and requiring an unusually strong literary stomach on the part of the reader. They may object to the vulgarity as unnecessary and to the Midrashic references as intrusions. But the fact is that people spoke and speak that way. The unashamed use naked language and the learned use Rabbinic quotations without conscious desire to display the resources of Jewish culture. Perhaps we should develop a stomach for this literary mixture as well as for the social mixture of the Millers and the Foleys. Not that the book advocates assimilation. It merely describes a segment of American Jewish life, where we must expect a certain amount of assimilation inevitably to take place.

All factors involved in the process of assimilation are present in this story. The struggle against assimilation is carried on by the family-minded Esther Miller, the typical "Jewish mother." The subject of the struggle is Moe Miller who rebels against his mother's possessiveness and, withdrawing into himself, becomes a morose, hard-working, individualistic farmer. The most pathetic character in the book is the father, Israel Miller—tolerant, scholarly, rationalistic and romantic, altogether unprepared to cope with the situation.

The story does not contain any character who is equipped to meet the forces of assimilation, armed with an intellectually appealing and emotionally satisfying program of Jewish living. Its setting and its period are those of the generation of Israel Millers who lived their Jewishness as the enthusiastic and learned Latin professor lives the culture of Rome. Judaism was not a serious business to them because they were not deeply moved by its demands. Though fully conscious of being Jews, they were somewhat impersonal about it. They treated it with a sense of humor not because they identified themselves with it so completely, though some did so identify themselves, but because they felt themselves always on the defensive with regard to its shortcomings. Therefore, though they may have produced, they did not create as Jews. But because they produced, they are sometimes considered the typical bearers of Jewish tradition.

This judgment of their role is also due to the fact that there was no other group in their time who did create. They were too individualistic, too impersonal, too parasitical toward the past to be ideal bearers of the Jewish tradition. Their children attributed their inadequacy not to the historic situation in which they found themselves but to an essential barrenness in Judaism itself. They looked elsewhere for fertile cultural ground. They found their satisfaction in different ways. Moe Miller found his in the soil and in producing tobacco leaf.

Moe marries Mary Foley. Was this a final thrust against his mother? If so, it was as unsuccessful as his resistance to Mary had been. Perhaps he was really resisting neither. Perhaps he knew from the beginning that he wanted to marry Mary though he always insisted upon thinking of her as a farm-hand. Perhaps he was not even resisting his mother for he knew that Mary, "the family girl, would try to catch him between the Foleys and the Millers. . . ." Perhaps he did not really disrespect his father whose weakness becomes the "paper bridge" over which Mary may yet lead Moe to a messianic reunion with his mother. The novel does not answer these questions definitely. The reader must make up his own mind about them. And there will be as many endings offered to this story as there are philosophies of Jewish life current in our country today. For we are still not past the period of the Moe Millers, or even of the Israel Millers.

The story is told in bold, broad strokes such as might be expected from an expert forger of literary elements. The characters are not described but emerge unmistakably from the incidents. This is a workmanlike job in which subject, background and medium are in complete harmony and produce a satisfying novel.

ARIO S. HYAMS

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*BREATHE UPON THESE, by Ludwig Lewisohn. The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Publishers, pp.* 218.

IN "Breathe Upon These," Lewisohn introduces us to a typical middle-class American family in the mid-west. The head of the household, Paul Burnett, owner of an Optical Company, brings over to this country a Jewish refugee, Erich Dorfsohn, the biggest living man in optics. The Dorfsohns (Mrs. Dorfsohn is a physician) are invited to dinner at the Burnetts where they are induced to tell the story of their trials and tribulations in Germany during the Hitler terror, and of their miraculous escape. By putting the Dorfsohns aboard the Struma, Lewisohn is able to tell the terrifying and tragic tale of that ill-fated boat too. The narrative of the adventures of the Dorfsohns begun at dinner and continued with interruptions through supper, takes up nearly the whole book. And at the end of the tale, the Burnetts, father, mother, daughter-in-law and fiancee, are left sadder and wiser than before. It is as simple as all that.

"Breathe Upon These" is a beautiful and moving book, but a disappointing novel. The Dorfsohns are clearly and memorably sketched. Their story is an epitome of the stories of a decade of German refugees. It is a story told with wise restraint and cumulative and telling effect. Lewisohn writes with his usual sensitivity and magic charm. All the more is the pity, therefore, that his book is structurally weak. For after bringing the Burnetts to life, and acquainting us with the psychological problems of the Burnetts (particularly Ada Burnett) and the two sons and the prospective daughter-in-law, Lewisohn just drops them as soon as the Dorfsohns come to dinner. The implication is that Dorfsohn's story somehow resolves their problems and puts everything in a different light. Life cannot be as simple as all that. Lewisohn should breathe upon these Burnetts some more. But Burnetts aside, "Breathe Upon These" will live as an evocation of an era and as a tragic monument to the victims of Hitlerism.

S. DININ

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*A GUIDE FOR THE BEDEVILLED, by Ben Hecht. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York,* 1944. *pp.* 276.

THIS is a devilish and maddening book to write about. It is not a book but a score of unconnected discursive essays with one central theme, anti-Semitism. Running through it is a biography of the author, his life in Chicago, in New York, in Hollywood, comments on the Bible and Jewish history, observations on Hollywood and Jews in Hollywood, and a full scenario which brings home the indifference and stupidity of mankind. In between, Hecht anatomizes anti-Semites and anti-Semitism. He punctures neatly the Jewish anti-Semites as well as the Voltaires and the Bellocs of yesteryear. He categorizes brilliantly the four types of political anti-Semites in this country, "the loon," "the man with a numbers ticket," "the goon," and the "gutter Napoleons." He writes out of mad hatred of anti-Semites and anti-Semitism. He writes provocatively, ironically, wittily, and, for all his despair and cynicism, with love and compassion. The extermination of the Jews in Europe has shocked him and stirred him as few have been stirred. He is like an aroused but skilled fighter in the ring, punching, jabbing rights and lefts and uppercuts wherever he sees an opening, but maintaining his balance, sparring, boxing, feinting, watching his opponent craftily, pursuing his prey relentlessly until he

gets a chance to rock him with a neat punch. Hecht packs a lot of disturbing truths in his fists, matters that shock you, that make you weep. (Let us hope the bedevilled can read.)

When it comes to the disease of anti-Semitism, Hecht is a visiting doctor who specializes in anatomy and diagnosis, but not in therapeutics or cure. He loves his patient, no doubt, but half the time he wonders out loud whether he is worth saving, and the other half of the time he wonders whether the physicians on the case really want to cure the patient or ever will. Hecht hates anti-Semites and anti-Semitsim, wants them crushed, and despairs of its ever being done. Hecht is a man in love with the Jews, who wants them kept alive for their aliveness, for their brash egoism. But if we agree with all Hecht has to say, what shall we Jews do about it, and what shall non-Jews do? Hecht does not tell us much on that score. After all, he only claims to be a guide, not a rescuer, prophet or statesman.

S. Dinin

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*RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR LEADERSHIP, by Solomon Zeitlin, The Dropsie College, Philadelphia.*

*THE TALE OF A WANDERING LADDER, by Nathan A. Barack, Bloch Publishing Co., New York.*

*A NEW WORLD IS BORN, by Israel H. Levinthal, Funk and Wagnalls Co., New York.*

*Religious and Secular Leadership* is a scholarly study by the editor of the Jewish Quarterly Review, of the stubborn and recurrent conflict in early and medieval Jewish life between religious and secular authority.

The volume opens with an account of the struggle during the Second Commonwealth when the Sanhedrin securely established its authority over the priesthood in Palestine. That supremacy continued, even after the destruction of the Temple. The rivalry between the two authorities, however, persisted, and only after the collapse of the Bar Kokba revolt did "the influence of the priestly class as a religious and political factor in Jewish history" come to an end. Even when, as happened infrequently, one man combined both religious and civil authority, e.g. the priest Johanan ben Zakkai, the relationship between the Sanhedrin and its priestly head was not always a harmonious one.

In Babylon, secular authority in the person of the Exilarch was supreme till the rise of the two academies of Sura and Pumbeditha, after which it became subordinate to the religious influence exercised by the chiefs of the two schools. The Arab conquest of Babylon brought back the old power of the Exilarch in the person of Bustonai, an appointee of the Caliph, who was accused by one Gaon of having obtained the office through bribery.

By the 8th Century, however, the religious leaders, the Geonim, again regained their authority and were practically supreme. The bitter conflict between Saadia and the Exilarch, who appointed him to head the Sura Academy and who expected a subservient religious leadership, strengthened the position and increased the authority of the Gaon, the religious head.

The chapters dealing with Maimonides and Saadia and Rashi will prove of current interest. Being preeminently religionists, the two last mentioned strove to enhance the authority, the influence, and the prestige of the religous teacher and scholar, and of the office of the rabbi. Saadia is the author of that famous and frequently quoted maxim that "Israel is a people only by virtue of its Torah" and Rashi, in the opinion of Dr. Zeitlin, is the founder of the modern rabbinate. In contrast with these, Maimonides, according to the author, was the champion of secular authority, since he regarded Israel not as a religious community but as a people soon to be resorted to its ancient homeland! The contention that the medieval philosopher alone, as distinguished from Rashi and Saadia, was a Jewish nationalist, the forerunner of political Zionism, is unconvincing. The Jew and Judaism are one and inseparable, and neither can survive without the other. Rashi and Saadia may have put more emphasis on the religion of Israel than on the Jewish people, but neither conceived Israel as a mere religious denomination or sect.

*The Tale of a Wandering Ladder,* a volume of articles and sermons, though small in size, is thought-provoking and searching. The author is deeply aware of the intellectual, religious and spiritual problems which agitate American Jews. With these he deals honestly and boldly. The second essay, "God as a Personal Force," which appeared originally in The Reconstructionist, and is a strong plea for a redefined monotheism, evidences a profound understanding of the present crisis in the Jewish religion. How true it is that "One must know in one's heart to whom he prays" before the new prayers and methods of worship now being so carefully prepared will arouse any response. And how refreshing and encouraging to read that "Judaism is certainly not anti-defamation and that it is larger than Jewish nationalism." Such affirmations cannot be repeated too often.

*A New World Is Born* is a superb homiletical work. Few Jewish preachers can handle old Midrashic material as skillfully as the distinguished Brooklyn rabbi. Some of the driest of ancient rabbinic texts become alive and

meaningful at his touch, and many an interpretation is both ingenious and arresting.

Such homiletics and such preaching, however delightful and saturated with Jewish lore, are not completely adequate for our day. One misses any searching or quest. One looks in vain for any effort to resolve the doubts of our day, or to meet the deep dissatisfactions with the religious status quo which are such striking features of modern Jewish religious life. Had Dr. Levinthal given his volume a Reconstructionist base and purpose, a more challenging message would have been the result. This will not lessen the delight in store for him who enjoys Jewish homiletical literature, in which class this volume will occupy an important place.

THEODORE N. LEWIS

# CORRESPONDENCE

## A Traditional Zionist's Critique of Rabbi Cohen

Sirs:

The article by Rabbi Cohen in the June 9 issue of *The Reconstructionist,* presents an interpretation of Zionism so at variance with my own understanding of it that, with all deference and humility, I feel it calls for a reply.

1. Rabbi Cohen states there are two main reasons currently advanced in behalf of the Zionist movement: (a) that Zionism will serve as a means of controlling, ameliorating, or even abolishing, anti-Semitism and (b) that Zionism will normalize Jewish life.

As I understand Zionism, these "two main reasons" are not the rationale of Zionism. They are what Zionists hope will be the logical consequence of the realization of Zionist aspirations. Without being captious, I believe the distinction important. The rationale of Zionism is the need of the Jewish people for a country. The ordinary person is not concerned with diplomatic representation and political relationships. If he is French, he wants to live in France, eat French food, read French newspapers, go to the French theatre, make love in the French language, dance French dances and send his children to French schools. He wants this regardless of what diplomatic representation can do for the French nation abroad. The Zionists want precisely the same thing for the Jews. To that extent, the classic analogy of Dr. Weizmann that the Jews want Palestine to be as Jewish as England is English is valid. That is what I believe the Zionist wants.

With no special knowledge of Diaspora problems, it seems to me that no useful purpose is served by examining the analogy for its application to the problems of Diaspora Jewry and its survival.

2. Whether or not, as Rabbi Cohen suggests, "it is even conceivable that Zionism may increase anti-Semitism" is, of course, impossible to answer categorically. However, on the basis of the fact, it would be reasonable to assume that anti-Semitism, such as has been rampant throughout European history, and which is generally conceded to be to some extent caused by the homelessness of the Jewish people, would be to that extent ameliorated if the Jewish people had a country. Moreover, only a philosophy of utter defeatism, would base its plans for the future on a reversion to reactionarism. It is not unreasonable to hope that, with education for truth and the widespread application of the theories and practices of democracy, anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry will gradually be supplanted by mutual tolerance, good-will and understanding among men and nations.

3. Rabbi Cohen says: "If we choose as our vocation leading the world to a higher morality then we must be ready to bear the assaults of those who would stand in its way." I would submit that any theory or understanding of Zionism which ascribes to the Jews a special mission or vocation for leading the world to a higher morality is, to say the least, untenable. In the words of Professor Namier: "There must be a country where Jews can live, work and amuse themselves as they please; be good, bad, great or ridiculous. . . . Some Zionists occasionally engage in high-minded, highfalutin discourses about the 'magnificent contribution which we shall then be enabled to make to the common stock of humanity' — and demonstrate therein once more the *galut* mentality of men who feel beholden to pay tribute, for which they seek compensation in high-brow superiorities. If, having concluded the Great Journey, we shall become altogether humdrum and mediocre, that, too, will be our own affair; but our children will have a better life—and this suffices."

4. "Normalcy," says Rabbi Cohen, "is a term with drab connotations." Perhaps. The United States, England, France, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and all other nations of the world are "normal" in the context used by Zionists. If that is drabness, it is, I believe, a "drabness" devoutly to be wished for, for ourselves.

The Jews have so long had a unique and anomalous position in the world, that they have come rather to cherish that "uniqueness." They are afraid to become "normal." The invalid becomes so accustomed to his "Magic Mountain" existence that he is unable to fit into the life of "those below." But no one

claims that the normal and well are the "drab" and justifies illness because of its spiritual advantages. The Jewish people are a sick people. Zionism means not only the rehabilitation of Palestine, but the rehabilitation of the Jewish people—they will have to change themselves—to get off the "Magic Mountain" and make themselves well again. No task is more difficult to contemplate or to accomplish.

To interpret Zionism as "a movement necessary to insure future cultural and religious contributions of the Jewish people in a democratic world," is, I believe, a false interpretation. If the Jewish people is to live as a people, in their own country, with all the responsibilities and privileges that citizenship in any democratic country involves, then they must rid themselves of the notion that they are a people with a special mission. They will have no more and no less responsibility toward men and nations than any other country. It should be the ideal of every nation to develop in its citizens a sense of responsibility for the peace, security and well-being of all humanity. This war has taught us, or should have, what are the consequences of isolationism, whether it masquerades as enlightened self-interest, or any other fine phrase. If ever there is to be peace among men and nations, each will have a responsibility toward every other and toward the whole. But this is no special Jewish mission—it is the mission of all humanity.

5. One last word—it is unfortunate, but understandable, that the immeasurable tragedy of the Jewish pepole has forced an identification between Jewish Palestine and Jewish rescue. The answer to this is not, as Rabbi Cohen suggests "to ask our leaders to reconsider seriously the ideological foundation of the Zionist movement." No "reconsideration," on that score is necessary. What is needed is to recapture the fundamental aspirations of Zionism; to recall the first principles, to re-inspire ourselves, to make ourselvs want to be well and normal.

MIRIAM COHEN
Washington, D. C.

## Rabbi Cohen's Reply

Sirs:

Miss Cohen's letter is a fine reiteration of the Zionist line which I criticized in my article. But most of her arguments reveal either a misunderstanding of my paper or a failure to think through her own position.

Miss Cohen makes the mistake, common to most Zionists, of refusing, ostrich-like, to look upon the Diaspora as a reality or to take it into account in her Zionist theory. Nowhere does she deal with this issue which was basic to my paper. The truth is that most Jews, who are attached to Judaism and want it to continue, are committed to a philosophy of Judaism which calls for the strengthening of the communities in the Diaspora. My argument was that such strengthening is impossible without Palestine's contribution of body to the disembodied soul of our people.

This fact of our polar existence in Palestine and Diaspora renders us a unique entity, because we are, to repeat my original words, the only nation with "a traditional national policy of long standing which calls for maintaining among its nationals abroad almost every aspect of their national civilization." The Diaspora Jew, unlike the Frenchman in his relation to France, has always wanted not only a normal Jewish life in Palestine, but also a full Jewish life in the Diaspora. Only in Canada has the Frenchman tried anything comparable, and there we are faced with other considerations (which I cannot discuss here), which render the situation different from that of our program of Jewish survival.

The desire for Jewish continuity in the Diaspora (which is the uniqueness stressed in my paper) far from being denounced as a "Magic Mountain" psychological ailment, ought to be set up as one of the healthiest examples of our will to live. Nor does the desire to teach this pattern of social life to the rest of the world mean that we are obsessed with a mission idea. The world today is becoming more and more convinced of the doctrine of cultural, as opposed to state nationalism. We Jews happen to be in a position to present cultural nationalism graphically to the world. Reconstructionists, at least, reject the type of normalcy which would confine Jewish life to Palestine (in practice or in theory). The abandonment of the Diaspora is the real defeatism, because it denies the possibilities of cultural development for minorities on foreign soil. Our hopes of creating a more worthwhile Jewish culture in the Diaspora imply a faith in the future of freedom for the group. Again, this is no mission idea. The burden of my presentation was the effort to define the rationale for Zionism mainly as a means of preserving Jewish life and enhancing its value for the Jew. My desire that our people try to lead in the moral uplift of mankind can, therefore, not justifiably be attached to my approach to Zionism. I join Miss Cohen in assigning the duty of a moral collective life to all humanity, but I also believe that Jewish morality has the possibilities of a distinctive contribution. We have already made beginnings in Palestine and in the Diaspora as well (cf. Dr. Liebman's article in *The Reconstructionist* of December 24, 1943). Naturally, the achievement of this contribution is not our "responsibility toward men and nations," but it would certainly be a sign of our own high moral level.

Miss Cohen has failed to show any weakness in my critique of the current Zionist rationale. And I repeat that the two arguments cited do constitute a rationale for most Zionists. Those Jews who need Palestine as a country for themselves end up there. However, most Jews (I refer to those living in lands relatively free from persecution) do not have that feeling for the land. These are the individuals who look to Palestine as a means of ending anti-Semitism and who fail to understand what they themselves mean by referring to Palestine as a normalizing factor. They are badly in need of a firmer ideological foundation for their emotional attachment to Zionism. That need Reconstructionism is trying to meet.

Finally, in regard to anti-Semitism, if an awareness of the forces of reaction operating daily before our eyes is defeatism, then I plead guilty.

JACK J. COHEN

## Another View of the Weakness of the American Jewish Conference

Sirs:

I should like to register a dissent with the point-of-view expressed in your editorial of June 9th, entitled "A Task for the American Jewish Conference." Although I am a member of the Z.O.A. and believe in the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, I cannot help but feel that the inherent weakness of the American Jewish Conference is *not*, as you contend, due to "its being a temporary federation of permanent and autonomous organizations." Rather its weakness comes from the fact that it over-reached the scope of its original function, and, therefore, failed to establish a foundation based on a unanimity of opinion among American Jewry generally.

I refer specifically to the resolution which called for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. I am familiar, of course, with the arguments that this viewpoint was held by the overwhelming majority and that the passage of the resolution was secured in a completely democratic fashion. I do not question the validity of these arguments. Subsequent events, however, have proved that the passage of the resolution was not only a hollow victory for the Zionists (since it convinced no one who was not formerly convinced anyway), but, what is far more regrettable, it defeated the original purpose of the Conference; *to achieve a common platform acceptable to all segments of American Jewry upon which could be built a program of united action concerning the basic problems now confronting world Jewry.*

Accounting this as the valid purpose of the Conference, no group had the moral right to indulge in the luxury—even if it did represent the majority—of endangering that purpose! Resistance against the White Paper and the use of Palestine as an important—perhaps the most important—haven of refuge represented a common viewpoint. The ideology of a commonwealth did not! As far as the *practical* function of the Conference for the immediate future was concerned, the former was sufficient. The determination of ultimate ideology was not and should not have become its task.

Since the last meeting of the Conference, it has become more or less an accepted practice to minimize the importance and extent of the dissenting minority, but this, it seems to me, is a most serious mistake. Regardless of its actual numbers, we must admit that it is a powerful minority, that a larger number of Jews than we like to admit have become confused as a result of the conflict, and finally, that the average Jew has all but lost faith in the efficiency of the Conference.

Personally, I am in *total disagreement* with the ideology of the minority. In my own congregation, I speak against it at every opportunity. But, because it is clear that a vital job must be done in the rescue and rehabilitation of European Jewry, because it is clear that that job can be done only with the cooperation of a united Jewry, and because it is clear that a common consent on ultimate ideology, although perhaps desirable, is by no manner of means necessary at this time to do the job, I make the plea that the Zionistic-minded majority summon up the courage and foresight to strike out the reference to the establishment of a commonwealth in Palestine in the platform of the Conference and issue a new invitation to the minority to rejoin that body on the basis of a *practical program* of action acceptable to all.

One last word—you state that the great need of the Jewish community in America is a "consensus on the nature of the Jewish collective entity, on the status that Jews wish to be recognized as having in the sight of the Gentile world and their own." May I remind you that such a concept cannot be developed through legislative action or the passing of resolutions. Rather it is the end product evolving out of the actual experiences and needs of a people. We who believe in the desirability of a positive Jewish life, the development of a wholesome and worthwhile religious-cultural life for the Jewish community of America, and the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, must teach and work, day-by-day and year-by-year, toward the attainment of that goal. We must not permit impatience to upset our good judgment, nor the passion for our ultimate goal to prevent unity on immediate and practical problems.

BERNARD STARKOFF
*Chaplain, U.S.N.R.*